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WEBB COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

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CITING FULL COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS, STATE FINALLY LIFTS FIVE-YEAR-OLD REMEDIAL ORDER ON WEBB COUNTY JAIL

AUSTIN – Webb County has resolved a number of long-standing problems with its jail and will no longer be under a remedial order, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards decided today.

“It is amazing what Webb County did in a [five month] time period,” said the Chairman of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, Commissioner Jimmy L. Jackson of Dallas.

The Texas Commission on Jail Standards determined during its open meeting in Austin today that Webb County has resolved issues involving inmate overcrowding, improper staffing and classification of inmates and is now in full compliance with state standards.

“At long last, the citizens of Webb County can hold their heads up high knowing their leaders finally have resolved an issue that for so long has tarnished our community,” said Webb County Judge Louis H. Bruni, “It took a lot of focus and hard work over these last five months to make up for a lack of leadership over the last five years,” said Bruni.

The Webb County jail had been under remedial order since August 1999, when the Commission on Jail Standards took action, citing Webb County’s repeated failure to comply with the state’s inmate population requirements.

Early last spring, the Office of the Attorney General threatened to sue Webb County and possibly take over the county jail because problems persisted, particularly with housing violent and non-violent inmates together and not taking the proper precautions with inmates suffering from mental problems. During the summer, the county also lost half of its federal inmates, resulting in a loss of \$1.3 million in revenues during this fiscal year.

To prevent these issues, Judge Bruni established a special task force comprised of senior county staff members, including the Sheriff, to address the ongoing jail problems. They worked throughout the summer and into the fall to bring the jail into compliance.

But the required changes did not come without a price tag. Roughly \$300,000 were needed to make necessary modifications to the jail. Because costs for the clean-up were not budgeted, however, Judge Bruni personally allocated almost \$250,000 from his own discretionary funds in order to get the job done.

“This was an expensive problem, but an important priority,” explained Bruni. “If we had not taken immediate action to overhaul the jail, Webb County could have suffered a loss of all federal prisoners and a huge budget shortfall for next year. I could not let that happen.

“I am proud of all the hard work that Webb County has performed during this past year to get our jail up to snuff,” said Bruni. “Taking the proper actions required a lot of dedication by a lot of people, and I applaud their efforts.

“These changes were long overdue,” noted Bruni. “As we continue to maintain these high standards at our county jail going forward, the citizens of Webb County finally can have confidence in their criminal justice system and the benefits it brings to our community.”

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